

Education Governance Responses
Warren Meeting (4/25/07) - Warren School Cafeteria

19 Attendees (facilitated by Robin Scheu)

Question #1: What are the advantages and disadvantages of the present education governance system in your community?:

Advantages

Local control/ownership
Policies fit individual towns' needs & desires
Taxpayers elect & are connected
Budget control better understanding (local facts & needs)
Direct communication & accountability with principal & school board
Results & success of children who attend Warren school
Community nature of schools (WW school board make policies that don't work for Nfld schools)
Small school "experiments"
Maintains individual "cultures"
Close relationship between board & principals
Better knowledge of local resources
Personally vested in "their town"
Engagement of many people
More board members allow for greater representation
We can participate in decision making process
Parent influence makes our schools NOT uniform
I feel comfortable expressing my opinion because school board members are my peers and they know who I am.
Our community's values can and are expressed in our school.
Having superintendent on location twice a month is a plus
Exceptionally great lunch!
Because we want it!
If it's not broken, don't fix it!
School board provides an outlet for youthful participants to keep & attract young parents to the town.
Policy directly from proponent to school board then to principal or teacher
This system allows for schools to develop a unique character & programs
Hiring policy much more personal & suited to unique needs to school
Like how current system mirrors town meeting philosophy & history of state.

Disadvantages

Current system "top heavy" – too much management
Potential for micro-management
Insular nature of individual school boards does not facilitate sharing of ideas & practices
Costs doubling and still increasing (ratio 5:1)
Time required for multi-group consensus
Competition with staffing/salaries
Superintendent's skill set (critical: leadership & cooperation)

Duplication of effort/resources
Superintendent “burn-out”
Limits scope/availability of superintendent’s educational leadership

Question #2: What are the advantages and disadvantages of the school district model suggested by Commissioner Cate in his White Paper?

Advantages

Eliminates redundancy
Superintendents would have time to be a visionary
More continuity in curriculum
Efficient or consolidated use of services
Ability to optimize student/staff ratio
Infrastructure sharing (OT, PT, Special Services)
Flexibility of use of staff
Could “even out” the educational quality
Lower costs in long run (?)
Potentially more efficient supt & staff
Streamlined management
Easier to get superintendents
Potential for better planning for savings/consolidating
Postpones consolidating schools within district
Preparatory education for high school

Disadvantages

Curriculum creativity may be stifled
Weighted vote
Greater physical distance to the meetings & “psychological distance”
Loss of local control
This is similar to losing our select board & having Montpelier decide if we need to plow or sand our roads!
Loss of interest, involvement, control (increases apathy)
Loss of individual cultures
Loss of info back to constituents
“Little fish” can get swallowed
“Uniform outcome”
Consolidating schools
Dealing with district school boards, voting process
Less participation by parents at school board meetings
Single rep could miss a meeting – no voice!
Farther away decision making
More decisions made by Australian ballot?
Large districts with more votes could end up running small schools

Debrief Comments:

Don’t make any changes until successful models are developed
Compare with communities that have been successful w/similar governance structure

Should be measurable cost savings
Keeping school boards as they are and reduce number of supervisory unions & superintendents
Struggle between local school board & local community
Consolidating schools should come from the towns
Consolidating town governance – “Washington”
Cost of administration already too high
Not sure how this would save money
Things are getting done already. Why fix, not broken
Run our own school like a private
One superintendent for the state
Reflection on distance – commissioner’s inaccessibility
Losing individuality and quality of education that we have.
Concept of local “council”, in addition to the overall board
Retain individual school boards, but incorporate one board member (weighted) to serve on the
high school board.